Lane Kirkland
President

Thomas R. Donahue
Secretary-Treasurer

815 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
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The Changing Situation Of Workers and Their Unions

A Report by the
AFL-CIO Committee on
the Evolution of Work

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The Committee on the Evolution of Work

The AFL-CIO Executive Council in August 1982 established the Committee on the Evolution of Work to review and evaluate changes that are taking place in America in the labor force, occupations, industries and technology.

The members of the Committee are:

Kenneth T. Blaylock, president, American Federation of Government Employees;
Kenneth J. Brown, president, Graphic Communications International Union;
William H. Bywater, president, International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Technical, Salaried and Machine Workers;
Patrick J. Campbell, president, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America;
Frank Drozak, president, Seafarers International Union of North America;
Murray H. Finley, president, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union;
Barbara Hutchinson, vice president, American Federation of Government Employees;
John T. Joyce, president, International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen;
Richard I. Kilroy, president, Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees;
Gerald W. McEntee, president, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees;
Charles H. Pillard, president, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers;
Albert Shanker, president, American Federation of Teachers;
John J. Sweeney, president, Service Employees International Union;
J.C. Turner, president, International Union of Operating Engineers;
Glenn E. Watts, president, Communications Workers of America;

Lynn R. Williams, president, United Steelworkers of America;
William W. Winpisinger, president, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers;
William H. Wynn, president, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union;
Paul J. Burnsky, president, Metal Trades Department;
Robert A. Georgine, president, Building and Construction Trades Department;
Jack Golodner, director, Department for Professional Employees;
Robert F. Harbrant, president, Food and Allied Service Trades Department;
Jean F. Ingrao, executive secretary-treasurer, Maritime Trades Department;
John F. Leyden, executive director, Public Employee Department;
John E. Mara, secretary-treasurer, Union Label and Service Trades Department;
Howard D. Samuel, president, Industrial Union Department.

The chairman of the Committee is AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Thomas R. Donahue.

The Committee met regularly during the past 2½ years and received reports from a number of experts, including Professor Richard B. Freeman of Harvard University and the National Bureau of Economic Research; Louis Harris of Louis Harris and Associates; Peter Hart of Hart and Associates; Professor Thomas A. Kochan of Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Professor Sar Levitan, director of the Center for Social Policy Studies at George Washington University; Professor James Medoff of Harvard University and the National Bureau of Economic Research; Professor Steven M. Miller of Carnegie-Mellon University; Jerome M. Rosow, president of Work in America Institute; Paul A. Strassman, vice president of Xerox Corporation; and Professor Paul Weiler of Harvard University Law School.

This is the Committee's second report; its initial report, **The Future of Work,** was issued in August 1983.

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The Changing Situation Of Workers and Their Unions

The nature of work, the organization of the workplace, and the size, location, composition and background of the workforce have been changing at an especially rapid rate in recent years and that process of change is continuing unabated.

Given the magnitude and velocity of these destabilizing changes, the labor movement has demonstrated a notable resiliency. Unions represent over 20,000,000 working men and women in the United States. Organized labor remains a vital force for progress in this nation; no serious observer denies that unions have played and continue to play a civilizing, humanizing and democratizing role in American life.

But despite their accomplishments, unions find themselves behind the pace of change. During the 1960s and 1970s, the American workforce grew in an unprecedented way — adding 1.3 million new workers per year in the 1960s and 2.1 million new workers per year in the 1970s — whereas the labor movement's membership remained static as gains made in organizing were offset due to job losses in basic industries. In the 1980s, union membership has shown a decline in absolute numbers as well as in percentage terms. The proportion of workers who are eligible to join a union and who in fact belong to a union has fallen from close to 45 percent to under 28 percent since 1954; using the measure of percentage of the entire workforce, the decline has been from 35 percent to under 19 percent.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council created the Committee on the Evolution of Work as part of its efforts to assess the significance of the changes in the work environment for the Federation and its affiliates. To do so, it is first necessary to review the labor movement's premises.

Unions are, first and foremost, organizations seeking to improve the lives of those they represent by improving their conditions of work and by insuring respect for their dignity as workers. Organized labor believes that each worker is entitled to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. That pay should include a share in the profits the worker helps to create and, thus, unions seek a larger share of those

profits than "market forces" might dictate. And we recognize that those profits can only be created in a well-managed enterprise, where both capital and labor contribute to the result.

Since its earliest days, the labor movement has sought to improve the quality of worklife, create workplace democracy and participate in joint employer-employee decision-making — long before these approaches became fashionable.

We understand that confrontation and conflict are wasteful and that a cooperative approach to solving shared present and future problems is desirable. (The problem always is finding those who wish to cooperate in a system of true equality — and until the time our desire for cooperation is fully reciprocated, unions must maintain the ability to meet employer confrontation.)

The labor movement also has sought to improve the conditions of life of its members by improving the conditions of life for all in our democratic society through political action and legislative efforts.

Organized labor seeks, in sum, through collective bargaining, political participation and legislative activity to bring about a broader sharing in the riches of the nation.

It is against the background of these basic and unchanging principles that we review the numerous and complex factors which have created the current situation confronting workers and their unions. The United States — indeed, every industrialized nation — is undergoing a scientific, technological, economic revolution every bit as significant as the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. There is now a world economy in which workers in underdeveloped nations, working at subsistence wages, are producing the most sophisticated goods, and even services, for more developed nations. Technological advances have eliminated scores of jobs, altered the requirements of an equal number, and created entirely new jobs. The success of the labor movement in improving wages and working conditions has had its effect on what workers see as their right, on what workers seek in further improvement, and on what employers recognize as the minimum conditions they must offer.

All of those developments are affecting labor unions throughout the industrialized world; none warrants prophecies of doom and despair regarding the future of the labor movement. Such prophecies were ventured 50 years ago, after American unions in the 1920s and 1930s had suffered serious setbacks and the number of unionized workers had declined dramatically; some predicted the demise of the labor movement at that time. In fact the reverse occurred: trade unionists of that era developed approaches attuned to their situation which

caught the allegiance of a generation of workers and organized labor experienced a period of remarkable growth.

We are confident that the labor movement has the capacity to continue the never-ending process of renewal and regeneration that has enabled and will enable unions to remain the authentic voice of workers and their chosen vehicle for expressing their will. It is the purpose of this report to offer recommendations along that line — capable of accomplishment and consistent with the labor movement's tested ideals. As the predicate for those recommendations, we begin by setting forth as clearly as we can the realities we now face and will face in the coming years and our grounds for believing that the labor movement can thrive amidst these changing conditions.

Changes In The Workforce

The workforce has grown with enormous rapidity and will continue to grow at a rapid, albeit reduced pace, in the 1980s and 1990s; some 17 million people will join the workforce by 1995. Three aspects of this growth have had a particular effect on the labor movement.

First, the growth of the workforce has occurred, and will continue to occur, principally in those sectors of the economy that have not traditionally been highly organized. Manufacturing and construction, for example, currently account for 50 percent of the AFL-CIO's membership, but these sectors have declined relative to others and currently employ only 22 percent of the civilian workforce. In contrast, the service sector of the economy has had, and will continue to have, the largest growth. During the 1970s, about 90 percent of all new jobs were added in service organizations. By 1990, service industries will employ almost three-quarters of the labor force. Yet, less than 10 percent of the service sector is organized, and only 20 percent of the AFL-CIO membership is in unions representing workers primarily in the service industries.

Second, the growth in the workforce has been and will be concentrated in relatively unorganized geographic areas. Since 1970, population in the "Sun Belt" has grown six times as fast as in the Great Lakes and New England regions, and the states with the greatest increase in the number of jobs were California, Texas and Florida. In the latter two states, only 12 percent of the workers are organized — third and fourth lowest in the nation; in contrast, in New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, between 35-40 percent of the workers are organized.

Third, the growth of the workforce is creating new patterns in which working people are less likely than in the past to be long-term, full-time employees. Increasingly, workers are members of two-earner families and even three-earner families in which one or more individual works part-time; indeed, approximately 20 percent of the workforce holds a part-time job. At the same time, more workers are employed in unstable operations whose life span is a few years, rather than several decades, and are classified as "independent contractors" or "managers" or "supervisors" rather than as "employees." These interrelated developments dilute the incentive to run the risks currently associated with engaging in organizing activity; indeed, working people not classified as "employees" in the labor laws are subject to open reprisal for seeking to join a union and have no legal right of recourse.

The Failure of the Law

In 1935, Congress enacted the Wagner Act which declared that "Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection." By the 1950s and 1960s, this principle had gained at least some measure of acceptance, and to a large extent employers did not choose to interfere with their employees' exercise of the right of self-organization; to some extent, employers resisted unionization by improving their employees' wages and working conditions. And if workers chose a union, employers by and large complied with their legal duty to bargain with that union in an honest effort to reach a contract.

In recent years, this trend has been reversed. The norm is that unions now face employers who are bent on avoiding unionization at all costs and who are left largely free to do so by a law that has proven to be impotent and a Labor Board that is inert.

It is difficult to quantify this change in employer attitudes and actions, but we all know it is there. A study of organizing campaigns in the private sector shows that 95 percent of employers actively resist unionization, and 75 percent of all employers hire so-called "labor-management consultants" to guide their efforts to avoid unionization at an estimated cost of over $100,000,000 annually. Many employers — how many thousands each year cannot be determined — discharge union activists. In 1957, the NLRB secured reinstatement for 922 workers who had been fired for union activity. By 1980, that figure had reached 10,000. Professor Paul Weiler of Harvard Law School has concluded that in 1980 there were at least 1.5 discriminatory discharges for every representation election conducted.

Even when workers opt for unionization, unions often face massive resistance in securing a contract; the rate of employer refusal to bargain has been rising twice as fast as even the rate of unlawful discharges. Consequently, after a bargaining unit organizes, the employees are not able to obtain a collective bargaining agreement approximately 35 percent of the time — a substantial increase since the

1960s. And the law's remedy — when it comes — is most often too late to matter.

Nor are anti-union actions confined to not-yet-organized or just-organized employers. Employers with longstanding collective bargaining relationships are closing unionized plants and diverting work to their established non-union plants or to new plants established in non-union areas in the United States and elsewhere. The owners of unionized companies are creating new, paper corporations to do the same work as the organized corporations and are transferring all or most of the work done to these new entities. And unionized employers are engaging in intransigent, bad-faith bargaining in order to provoke a strike so that the employer can replace his employees and oust their bargaining representative.

Two principal factors have combined to make it possible for employers to engage in such hostile actions against employees who wish to bargain collectively. First, as the Committee explained in its first report, **The Future of Work,** the United States has become a society with persistently high levels of unemployment. Unless current policies are changed, this will continue; under even relatively optimistic projections, there will be a structural shortage of at least 4,000,000 jobs throughout the 1980s.

Second, the federal government has done its part to encourage hostile employer actions by providing less and less protection to workers who exercise their right to organize and by setting an example for the most virulently anti-union employers. The Reagan Administration's handling of the air traffic controllers provided a signal to, and the model for, anti-union employers. Thereafter, the Administration turned over the labor law to an NLRB Chairman who has publicly declared that "collective bargaining frequently means . . . the destruction of individual freedom and the destruction of the marketplace," and that "the price we have paid is the loss of entire industries and the crippling of others." Not surprisingly, the Board he chairs has, at every turn, cut back on the extent of protection the law provides to workers who desire to unionize.

Because of these developments, the costs associated with organizing are increasing while the resources available are declining. The experience in this country is that a catalyst is usually needed for a group of individuals to shake the habits of a lifetime and to assert themselves by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by collective action; that is especially true when those individuals are subject to economic reprisal. Union members have always accepted it as their responsibility to start the process of organization. But in recent years, as the size of the workforce has expanded rapidly, the number of union members has declined and the needs of the already-organized have increased, it has become increasingly difficult for union members to meet that responsibility.

The Desires and Perceptions of Workers

The Committee, with the assistance of Professor James Medoff of Harvard University, Louis Harris and Associates, and Professor Thomas Kochan of MIT, reviewed all published surveys on the public attitude toward unions conducted during the past 25 years and supplemented that material with additional surveys. Four aspects of that data are of special relevance to the labor movement.

1. **Attitudes Toward Work** — Americans by and large see themselves as independent, self-confident, self-reliant and skeptical of claims of authority. In line with that perception, workers, particularly better-educated workers, are becoming more insistent on securing more freedom in the workplace. It is increasingly true that the measure of a good job is high discretion as much as high pay. And despite claims to the contrary, the "work ethic" — the personal need to do one's best on the job — is stronger in the United States than in other western democracies. The striking new factor is a shift in which Americans are less likely to see work as a straight economic transaction providing a means of survival and more likely to see it as a means of self-expression and self-development.

2. **Job Satisfaction** — Fifty-one percent of non-union workers report that they are "very satisfied" with their jobs. But when probed for specifics, only 40 percent or less say they are very satisfied with their fringe benefits or their opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their jobs, and only 28 percent say they are very satisfied with their pay or their opportunity for job advancement. There is, moreover, some indication that the degree of job satisfaction is **decreasing.** In 1973, 57 percent of all workers — figures limited to non-union workers are not available — reported that they were "very satisfied" with their jobs, whereas in 1984 the comparable figure was 51 percent.

3. **Attitudes Toward Unions and Employers** — American workers, and especially non-union workers, are ambivalent in their attitudes toward unions. Over 75 percent of all workers — and over 75 percent of non-union workers — state that they agree that unions in general improve the wages and working conditions of workers. Over 80 percent of all workers agree that unions are needed so that the legitimate complaints of workers can be heard. Yet when asked to assess the effect of organization on their present employer, 53 percent of non-union workers state that wages and fringe benefits would not improve and 74 percent state that job security would not improve.

This same discontinuity is reflected in survey data concerning attitudes toward employers. Almost 60 percent of employees believe that most companies make enough profit so that they can afford to raise wages without raising prices. Yet over 50 percent of workers believe that their own employer provides all the pay and benefits he can afford — and that is true both of unionized workers (54 percent feel that way) and non-union workers (57 percent).

4. **The Policies of Unions** — One fact emerges from the survey data quite clearly: non-union workers do not perceive unions as pursuing an institutional agenda drawn from the needs and desires of their members. Sixty-five percent of such workers express agreement with the statement that "unions force members to go along with decisions they don't like." Sixty-three percent state that they believe that union leaders — as distinguished from union members — decide whether to go on strike. Fifty-four percent believe that "unions increase the risk that companies will go out of business;" 57 percent believe that "unions stifle individual initiative;" and 52 percent believe that unions fight change. And, among the population as a whole — there are no data limited to non-union workers — 50 percent state that they believe that most union leaders no longer represent the workers in their unions. Significantly, workers who are in unions express very different — and far more positive — views of their union.

* * *

It is apparent from the foregoing that the labor movement must demonstrate that union representation is the best available means for working people to express their individuality on the job and their desire to control their own working lives, and that unions are democratic institutions controlled by their members and that we have not been sufficiently successful on either score.

The Seeds of a Resurgence

All of the foregoing provide grounds for the most serious concern. But the data we have studied, as well as our own common sense, provide grounds for hope as well and, indeed, suggest the seeds for a resurgence of the labor movement.

To begin with, it is important to recognize that the decline in union membership that occurred in recent years has **not** been the result of dissatisfaction of union members with their unions but was, instead, a function of the economic recession which hit with particular force in those sectors of the economy that are heavily unionized. (Union decertification, while on the rise because of increased employer stimulation, remains statistically insignificant — one-tenth of one percent.)

Second, despite all the changes that have occurred and are occurring in the workforce, the value of organization for workers remains as great today as when unions began. Our own experience shows that to be true and the data confirm it; unionized workers earn on average 33 percent more than their non-union counterparts. The higher pay of unionized workers generally prevails among all age groups, occupations, and industries.

Third, workers who already are organized appreciate the benefits of unionization. Over 90 percent of organized workers believe that unions improve the wages and working conditions of members; 67 percent reject the proposition that unions are unnecessary to assure fair treatment; and over 60 percent of unionized workers believe that if their own employer were not unionized, wages and fringe benefits would be lower. Furthermore, almost 75 percent of unionized workers state that they are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their union.

Fourth, unions are increasingly successful in enrolling the types of workers who are forming an increasingly large share of the workforce. Labor union members are better educated than the general population, with a higher proportion of both high school and college graduates. Only 16 percent of union members (vs. 28 percent of the general population) have not graduated from high school. Forty-four

percent are high school graduates (vs. 39 percent of the total population), and a total of 39 percent have either had some college or completed a college degree (vs. 33 percent). Twenty-one percent of union members (vs. 16 percent) actually completed their college degrees. Economically, union households are typically middle class, with 65 percent earning incomes between $20,000 and $50,000 (vs. 53 percent of the general population). This is in large part because union members are much more likely (58 percent) than the general population (34 percent) to see their work as "a career, not just a job." By occupational category, 41 percent of members (vs. 33 percent) are in white-collar jobs. Another 20 percent are craftsmen or foremen (vs. 7 percent). And the public understands this: only 24 percent of non-union workers express the belief that unions are only for blue-collar workers; 69 percent disagree.

Fifth, the opinion survey data show that non-union workers accept the fundamental premise on which the trade union movement has been and is based: that workers are more effective in insuring democracy in the workplace and in obtaining redress for their grievances when they act in concert than when they act alone. Forty-seven percent of non-union workers endorse that proposition (as compared to only 42 percent who disagree). And among unorganized service workers, unskilled workers and professionals — groups that will expand in size in the coming years — support for the usefulness of concerted activity is even stronger; over 60 percent agree that a group approach is more effective than an individual approach.

Sixth, and finally — and, in our view, most important of all — experience demonstrates that the current generation of workers, when given a fair chance to form a union at their workplace, elects to do so in large numbers.

The Canadian experience is especially instructive. Canada has roughly the same type of economy, many similar employers, and has undergone the same changes that we previously have described with respect to the United States. But in Canada, unlike in the United States, the government has not defaulted in its obligation to protect the right of self-organization; rather, Canada's law carefully safeguards that right. And in Canada, the percentage of the civilian labor force that is organized increased in the period 1963-1983 from roughly 30 percent to 40 percent, at the same time that the percentage of organized workers declined in the United States from 30 percent to 20 percent.

Developments in the public sector in the United States have been similar to those in Canada. From 1971 to 1983, AFL-CIO public sector membership grew by over 1,000,000 workers (while membership in the private sector declined by 2,000,000). Today, approximately 50

percent of full-time state and local government employees are organized. Public sector employees are not a breed apart from their private sector counterparts. But in the public sector, while strong anti-union pressure is not uncommon, most workers are free to join a union, either because of effective state laws or because public employers do not deprive workers of that right to the same extent as in the private sector.

In sum, a period of resurgence — of sustained growth — is within our grasp. The recommendations that follow are designed to spur such a resurgence.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are based upon the fundamental premises stated at the start of the report: that the labor movement exists to advance the interests of workers as workers see their interests, and that to continue to perform their role, unions must come to grips with the current and changed realities workers face. Our aims — achieving decent wages and conditions, democracy in the workplace, a full voice for working people in the society, and the more equitable sharing of the wealth of the nation — remain unchanged. The means of securing those aims, while grounded in experience, must meet today's needs and anticipate tomorrow's aspirations.

There are, we believe, steps that can be taken to improve the efficacy of our traditional programs, and we will discuss those steps below. But from what has been said already, it is apparent that it is not enough merely to search for more effective ways of doing what we always have done; we must expand our notions of what it is workers can do through their unions. Accordingly, we begin with recommendations for new approaches that we believe worthy of examination.

New Methods of Advancing the Interests of Workers

1.1. Unions should experiment with new approaches to represent workers and should address new issues of concern to workers. The diversity of approaches different unions have developed to meet the myriad of interests and desires of a diverse workforce in workplaces scattered throughout this country is an essential part of the genius of the American labor movement. The opinion data indicate that many workers, while supporting of the concept of organization, wish to forward their interests in ways other than what they view as the traditional form of union representation — in their view, an adversarial collective bargaining relationship; the data also suggest that there are issues of concern to these workers that have not been at the center of the traditional collective bargaining agenda. A two-fold response by unions is then required.

First, unions must develop and put into effect multiple models for representing workers tailored to the needs and concerns of different groups. For example, in some bargaining units workers may not desire to establish a comprehensive set of hard and fast terms and conditions of employment, but may nonetheless desire a representative to negotiate minimum guarantees that will serve as a floor for individual bargaining, to provide advocacy for individuals, or to seek redress for particular difficulties as they arise. In other units, a bargaining approach based on solving problems through arbitration or mediation rather than through ultimate recourse to economic weapons may be most effective.

Second, and equally important, unions must continually seek out and address new issues of concern to workers. For example, the issue of pay inequity has become a proper concern of women workers; collective action provides the surest way of redressing such inequities. There is a strong concern among workers about health and safety issues and a high degree of impatience with the inadequacy of government programs in this area. Again, collective action through labor unions can develop constructive steps to meet these concerns.

In this regard, the survey data suggest, and our experience indicates, that there is a particular insistence voiced by workers, union

and non-union alike, to have a say in the "how, why and wherefore" of their work. These needs and desires are being met in some cases by union-management programs affording greater worker participation in the decision-making process at the workplace. Several major unions have developed such programs and report a positive membership response. The labor movement should seek to accelerate this development. Quality of worklife programs can only serve their humanizing purpose when they are based on the concepts of worker dignity and equality and grounded in collective bargaining. The reality is that some employers have used quality of worklife programs as "union avoidance" measures or as simple "speed-up" efforts without any commensurate commitment to increasing worker involvement and improving worklife. Programs of this latter type can only engender disappointment and discontent.

It is not our purpose here to detail the full range of options for meeting workers' needs through variations on the basic collective bargaining system; a new orthodoxy is the precise opposite of the proper approach. Collective bargaining is not, and should not be, confined by any rigid and narrow formula; the bargaining process is shaped by the times, the circumstances and the interplay between particular employers and employees. It is the special responsibility of the individual unions that make up the labor movement to make creative use of the collective bargaining concept and to adapt bargaining to these times and to the present circumstances.

1.2 Consideration should be given to establishing new categories of membership for workers not employed in an organized bargaining unit. The polling data indicate that approximately 28 percent of all non-union employees — 27,000,000 workers in all — are former union members; most of those individuals left their union only because they left their unionized jobs. There are hundreds of thousands more non-union workers who voted for a union in an unsuccessful organizing campaign or who are supporting or have supported efforts to establish a union in their workplace. These individuals might well be willing to affiliate with a union with which they have had contact or with which they have some logical relationship provided that the cost were not prohibitive; this would be especially true to the extent unions offered services or benefits outside of the collective bargaining context of the kind described below. New categories of membership should be created by individual unions or on a Federation-wide basis to accommodate individuals who are not part of organized bargaining units, and affiliates should consider dropping any existing barriers to an individual's retaining his membership after leaving an organized unit.

1.3 The AFL-CIO should undertake a study of providing direct services and benefits to workers outside of a collective bargaining structure. The survey data indicate that a large number of non-union workers desire a number of employment-related services (such as job training) and fringe benefits (such as supplemental medical insurance) that are not normally available to them. Indeed, 61 percent of non-union workers say that they would be very interested or fairly interested in joining an organization that provides information about job training and job opportunities, and 47 percent of non-union members state that they definitely or probably would join an organization in order to receive certain specified benefits.

The labor movement provides a logical vehicle for meeting these employee desires, and doing so could introduce some non-union workers to the benefits provided by union representation. Such services could also be made available to current members through their own unions, thereby increasing the benefits of unionization, and could be made available to persons in the new category of membership described above. A feasibility study should therefore be done to determine what services can be provided on a cost-effective basis, what vehicles would be most effective in providing such services, and to whom the services should be made available.

1.4 Unions should expand their use of the electronic media. The survey data show that despite the labor movement's efforts, we have failed to overcome the misconceptions about what unions do and have failed to make the public aware of the contributions of unions in the workplace and in society at large. This country is, moreover, in the midst of an information revolution that has greatly increased the choices available to American media consumers and created a much more fragmented communications industry through which we must have an integrated program to attempt to communicate our message. It is therefore imperative that, within the limits of our resources, we mount and sustain a coordinated and long-range communications program, employing every technique and medium available.

The AFL-CIO, through the work of the Labor Institute of Public Affairs, and its affiliates have begun to lay the groundwork for labor's transition into the electronic era. We recognize that the labor movement cannot apply better communications techniques as an afterthought but must communicate the substance of its activities as they occur. We are committed to reversing the near invisibility of American trade unions and their members in TV and radio programming and to introducing new technologies — such as teleconferencing, spot advertising, videocassettes, cable TV programming, and full-length broadcast programs — to help make unions more effective.

1.5 Coordinated-comprehensive corporate campaigns and the pressure of public opinion should be used to secure the neutrality of employers whose employees seek to organize a union and to assure good faith bargaining. In the past, organizing has often proceeded on the assumption that the law could be relied upon both to assure employees a fair and free choice on whether to form a union and also to require the employer to bargain with a union chosen by a majority of the employees. Members of the general public assume that such a law is in place and is scrupulously observed by employers. This assumption is fanciful; an employer bent upon opposing unionization is not even inconvenienced by the present law in carrying out his anti-union activities. Accordingly, neutralizing employer opposition and compelling good faith bargaining should be considered an essential part of organizing.

In some circumstances, a neutrality agreement can be obtained from an employer voluntarily (for example, in collective bargaining with an already-organized employer who operates non-union facilities). Where this is not the case, other steps must be taken to convince the recalcitrant employer not to interfere with the employees' right of self-organization (and to bargain in good faith where a union has been chosen). The use of non-workplace pressure, including all forms of publicity — generally referred to as a "corporate" campaign or "coordinated" or "comprehensive" campaign — has proven to be an effective means toward that end. Although the corporate campaigns that have attracted the most attention were large-scale campaigns at the national level, such as the J.P. Stevens and Beverly Enterprises campaigns, non-workplace pressure can be exerted on a smaller scale as well.

Unions should develop the research and other capabilities needed to mount an effective corporate campaign, and organizers should be trained in the various types of corporate campaign tactics. The AFL-CIO and its departments should gather together the already substantial body of experience unions have garnered in corporate campaigns and develop the necessary expertise to provide instruction and information concerning coordinated corporate or comprehensive campaign techniques.

1.6 The AFL-CIO should establish a pilot project of experimental organizing committees. The experience gained in earlier periods of union growth suggests the potential usefulness of organizing committees. That experience suggests that an entity single-mindedly devoted to the task of assisting unorganized workers in forming unions may be more successful than an ongoing entity whose first priority must be to provide service to its present members. To test this theory, a carefully designed AFL-CIO program should be developed

under which one or more organizing committees, bringing together interested unions, would be established for a defined period of time and charged with the task of organizing the unorganized in a given area, industry or company.

* * *

While the new approaches described above are promising and worthy of trial, the heart and soul of the labor movement will continue to be the representation of workers through the medium of traditional collective bargaining and traditional organizing campaigns. The recommendations that follow are designed to enhance the efficacy of our efforts in these regards. They are divided into three categories: increasing membership participation in their unions; developing better communications with the public; and improving organizing techniques.

Increasing Members' Participation In Their Union

Unions are their members. A union resurgence requires that the individual union member have the fullest possible opportunity to participate in his or her organization and receive the highest quality representation from the union.

2.1 Unions need to provide additional opportunities for members to participate in union affairs in ways quite different from traditional attendance at meetings. In a world filled with available diversions, attendance at monthly meetings — important as those meetings are to maintaining the democratic nature of our movement — cannot be the principal form for membership participation. A broad range of activities to attract membership participation, improved community services and community-related activities, and an expanded committee structure to provide membership advice and guidance to the leadership are all ways of involving more members in the affairs of their local union. Moreover, the union can increase its communication with members, as well as the general public, by reaching directly into the home with radio, television and cable TV programming that can heighten the sense of community and earn an enlarged legitimacy for unions and their issues.

2.2 Unions should increase the opportunities for members and national leaders to interact with each other. A strong labor movement requires that its members understand that the union is theirs and that the union leadership remain attuned to the desires of the members. Elections, regular membership meetings and conventions all provide members the right to participate in, and to control, the fundamental decisions of the organization. But more must be done to enhance the members involvement in the union. For example, periodic regional, divisional or state conferences at which national or regional leaders speak, and listen, to members can be useful in these regards. Local, regional and national events in which members participate, such as Solidarity Day, Labor Day celebrations and Union Label, legislative, political or other "issue" conferences are likewise important. So, too, are opinion surveys which provide the membership yet another opportunity to express their views.

2.3 Unions should make special efforts to provide an orientation program for new members. Each year up to a million employees join existing bargaining units. These workers and all new members should be provided an orientation explaining how the union functions, what it has accomplished, what its goals are, and how the individual can become involved in the union. Orientation should also be provided concerning the labor movement generally and its accomplishments and goals. Older members should be involved in these programs to help give new members a sense of the history of the organization and to provide another opportunity for membership participation.

2.4 Unions should devote greater resources to training officers, stewards and rank-and-file members. In a vastly more complicated world, there is an increased need to provide training opportunities for local leadership and potential leaders. Training must encompass the skills local leaders need to function effectively and the information local leaders need to confront the issues of the day. Each affiliate should establish an education function of this type, and the George Meany Center for Labor Studies and the Education Department should explore new ways of serving affiliates by developing education materials and model curricula and by expanding the number of members reached by the Center. In addition, alternative sources for funding such training through collectively bargained programs or through additional funding of public education facilities should be fully explored.

Improving the Labor Movement's Communications

3.1 Efforts should be made to better publicize organized labor's accomplishments. Too often, only "bad" news about organized labor gets publicized; successes are ignored, and efforts made by unions to further the interests of workers and the general public go unnoticed. Unions should be far more aggressive in publicizing their successes and their work for causes that provide benefits far beyond our membership rolls. Programs to provide information about unions, and about the trade union movement and its contributions to workers and to American society, in the schools, must be enlarged. Current curricula in elementary and secondary schools pay scant attention to these matters. Each central body and state federation should develop, in cooperation with the Education Department, a "Labor in the Schools" program. These programs can draw on local union members, leaders and retirees, and can provide another opportunity for the involvement of members in the affairs of their union.

3.2 Union spokespersons need training in media techniques. Union spokespersons must be skilled in securing the public ear and eye and in communicating effectively when attention is attracted. The Labor Institute of Public Affairs, the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, and the AFL-CIO Department of Information have begun media technique programs; these need to be continued and expanded.

3.3 Efforts must be made at every level to better inform reporters about unions and trade unionism. Most non-union workers obtain their information about unions from the media. Too often, reporters are uninformed about unions and have contacts with unions only in crisis situations. Attention must be given to communications with reporters on a regular basis in a non-crisis atmosphere about what we do and how we function. Union leaders at all levels should expand their efforts to meet with reporters on a periodic basis for such discussions and should devote greater efforts to providing a trade union perspective on political, economic and social events.

3.4 The AFL-CIO should develop a pilot project for a targeted area to test the usefulness of advertising to improve the public's understanding of labor. Several unions have devoted considerable re-

sources to advertisements designed to improve the public understanding of the union and/or its members with considerable effect. A detailed feasibility study should be made of a targeted Federation-wide program of this kind.

3.5 Interferences with the right of workers to form a union should be forcefully brought to the attention of the general public to develop public support for labor law reform. The survey data indicate that over 80 percent of the American public agree with the proposition that workers should have the right to join unions. But the American public does not realize that under existing labor law that right exists only in theory and not in practice — that employers can, in fact, intimidate and coerce their employees and that the law's remedies are too little and too late. The public needs to be informed of these facts, through exposes of particular cases, in order to develop a constituency for real labor law reform in private employment and for the passing of legislation legalizing collective bargaining for public employees at the state and local levels.

Improving Organizing Activity

There must be a renewed emphasis on organizing. The large increase in the workforce and in the extent of employer opposition requires an equal increase in the emphasis placed on, and the resources devoted to, organizing. All of the destabilizing changes we have detailed above have had the effect of decreasing the time and effort put into organizing. This trend must be reversed if any of the recommendations made below are to have any effect.

4.1 Organizers should be carefully chosen and trained. Organizing is a skill; it is not something that everyone can do and is not something that can be taught in a one-week training session. There should be broad recruitment efforts within and outside the labor movement for organizers, and organizers should be extensively trained. Moreover, organizers should be matched to the particular target to be organized since the most effective organizer for a particular workforce is ordinarily one whose education and background is similar to the people the organizer works with and who is familiar with the type of work those individuals perform.

4.2 Organizers should make greater use of modern technology. Modern communications technology enables workers at an unorganized plant to see first-hand what unionization is about and what it can accomplish and to communicate with workers at other plants who have formed a union. The persuasive impact of this technology cannot be doubted; indeed, anti-union employers often use it effectively. It is as important for organizers to master the use of video in small groups, of electronic conferencing for the press, of strategic advertising campaigns, and other media skills, as it is for them to devise effective messages aimed at potential members in an organizing drive.

4.3 Union leaders and rank-and-file members should be more involved in organizing efforts. In organizing, personal contacts both with union leaders and with rank-and-file members who have formed a union can be of critical importance. Union leaders at all levels must continue to be directly involved in organizing and must place renewed emphasis on bringing the benefits of trade unionism to the un-

organized as a prime function of every labor organization. Greater use also should be made of rank-and-file members in campaigns because they are the best witnesses of trade union effectiveness. (Additionally, this activity provides another opportunity for membership participation in the affairs of the union.)

4.4 Organizing targets should be carefully chosen to maximize the chance for success. From the national polling data, it is possible to identify particular types of employers or employment conditions which are conducive both to organizing and, of equal importance, to obtaining a first contract, and it is also possible to identify particular groups which are more likely to want union representation; for example, former union members and younger workers tend to be more favorably inclined to unionization than are older workers who have never been in a union. Before a union expends significant resources on an organizing campaign, objective analysis should be done of the likelihood of successfully securing majority support and negotiating a first contract. Where feasible, polling of the workers should be conducted before the organizing begins, and polling should continue during any large scale organizing campaign.

4.5 Small units should not be overlooked as organizing targets. Thirty-five percent of the national workforce is employed in companies with less than 25 employees. Labor conditions in smaller companies tend to be inferior to conditions in larger companies, and employers in these companies are less likely to resist their employees' desire to form a union; not surprisingly, therefore, unions have been more successful in representation elections in small bargaining units than in elections in larger bargaining units. However, servicing these units effectively can be difficult. Accordingly, special attention should be given to developing techniques for organizing and representing workers in small units.

4.6 Unions should experiment with new organizing techniques. Traditionally, organizers have focused their efforts on obtaining authorization cards and securing recognition in order to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement. In the climate we now face, this may be too large a first step to attempt, at least in certain situations. Experimental efforts to organize workers around particular issues, rather than around the principle of collective bargaining, are worth exploring; an organizer might be more effective in achieving the ultimate end of majority support for collective bargaining if the organizer has first demonstrated the potential of concerted activity by achieving results on a particular issue of concern to the workers in the unit.

4.7 When a unit is organized, unions representing other units of the same employer should coordinate assistance to the new unit to obtain a first contract. Coordinated bargaining and, where necessary, coordinated pressure maximizes labor's strength. Such strength is especially important in attempting to obtain a first contract in a newly-organized unit. Accordingly, all unions representing employees of such an employer — at all of the employer's worksites — should work together to help obtain a collective bargaining agreement for the newly-organized unit, as such an agreement will benefit all the employees of the employer. The AFL-CIO and the trade and industrial departments should facilitate such coordination.

4.8 Unions should make special efforts to attract those who belong to organized bargaining units but have not joined their union. By most estimates, 2,000,000 of the employees who are covered by AFL-CIO union contracts are not union members. These workers are known by the local leadership and are a natural audience for the union's message, and every effort should be made to turn them from free riders to full and enthusiastic members. These "internal organizing" campaigns can produce a far more closely-knit work group and can add to the union's effectiveness in the workplace.

Structural Changes to Enhance the Labor Movement's Overall Effectiveness

There are a number of structural changes within the labor movement that would enhance our overall effectiveness.

5.1 The AFL-CIO Executive Council should adopt guidelines for use by affiliates contemplating mergers. Roughly 50 of the AFL-CIO affiliates have under 50,000 members and another 30 have under 100,000 members. These unions have, by and large, been hardest hit by membership loss and have the least ability to grow to offset the loss. Some of the unions enjoy a strong position in their industries or crafts and are well able to serve their members. Many of the others are suffering a reduced capacity to serve their members and have begun to examine the efficacy of merger with other unions. But mergers are difficult to effectuate and, if poorly conceived, can cause a union to lose that identity which helps bind the members and the organization.

Accordingly, both active AFL-CIO encouragement of mergers and guidelines as to appropriate and inappropriate mergers deserve a high priority. For example, mergers are more likely to be effective if the partners share a community of interest either because of a substantial overlap in the industries in which their members work, or because a substantial portion of their members work in industries that are vertically integrated, or because a substantial portion of their members work for a common, conglomerate employer. Similarly, mergers are more likely to be effective where there is potential for growth either because of projected increases in employment in the principal industry of one or both unions or because of the possibility of substantial organizing gains. The Committee has considered appropriate criteria and recommends the adoption by the Executive Council of the "Merger Guidelines" set forth in the Appendix.

5.2 The AFL-CIO officers and staff should provide assistance to affiliates in effecting successful mergers. The AFL-CIO officers and staff can aid in assessing whether a proposed merger is viable and, if not, they can suggest alternatives. They can also assist in resolving some of the complex issues that arise in the merger process. Such assistance should be readily available to affiliates and should be proffered where it seems appropriate. The ad hoc Committee on Mergers should continue to work as an additional resource for unions considering merger and should report periodically to the Executive Council.

5.3 The AFL-CIO should establish a mechanism for resolving organizing disputes among unions. All too often, precious organizing dollars have been expended on competition among different affiliates to organize the same bargaining unit. This competition is wasteful and may result in a weakened union. Following the pattern of Article XX of the AFL-CIO Constitution, which has been successful in resolving raiding disputes, the Federation should establish machinery, including a mechanism for mediation, to resolve these actual and anticipated organizing conflicts and to resolve competition for the affiliation of independent unions as well. The operating principle should be a preference for the union with the highest degree of support in the bargaining unit, taking into account the extent of organization that has taken place and the relative connection of the competing unions to the bargaining unit and employer in question.

5.4 Unions must adapt modern budgeting, program analysis and planning techniques to union structure and finances. As resources become more restricted and demands on them increase, the need for the use of the most modern financial management methods becomes more manifest. While unions have particular difficulties in applying budgeting techniques — given the unpredictable nature of organizing and collective bargaining activities — it is clear that some of the management, budget and planning techniques so highly developed in American business circles can be successfully adapted to union needs. A number of unions are currently engaged in both long- and short-term planning and in adjusting their financial allocations to the goals thus developed as instances warrant. A few unions are experimenting with long-range strategic planning and with other management techniques. These tools need to be developed further by the AFL-CIO and its affiliates.

5.5 A new method of funding state and local central bodies should be developed. It is essential in the current climate that labor's voice be effectively heard at the state and local levels as well as at the national level; this is the role of the state federations and the city central bodies. At present, the state federations benefit all unions but are funded by only some unions; the average level of affiliation with the state federations in recent years has been 55 percent. This means that certain affiliates carry a disproportionate share of the responsibility for sustaining the state federations and that those federations are not as strong as they could and should be. A similar pattern prevails at the local level. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the Executive Council Committee on State and Local Central Bodies

be instructed to develop a solution to this problem of inadequate and inequitable financing of these important bodies, such as a system under which, in lieu of the optional payments to the various state and local central bodies by AFL-CIO affiliates or their subordinate bodies, each affiliate should be required to make a per capita payment to the AFL-CIO for the state federations and local central bodies, which payments would then be distributed to these organizations based on the size of the population they represent. The Committee on State and Local Central Bodies should examine whether it is feasible to phase in, over a four- or five-year period, such a system, or any alternative that Committee may develop which would address the problem of the inadequate and inequitable financing of these important bodies.

* * *

The preceding recommendations result from a searching self-examination and honest appraisal of our strengths and weaknesses and encompass a wide range of proposed actions to strengthen our unions and our movement and to enhance our ability to serve present and future members. This process of examination and appraisal must be continued within the Federation and within every affiliate as the basis for planning realistically for the future.

As the final note of this report, two quotes from our predecessors provide both a call to action and a reassurance:

> *". . . the labor movement cannot be content with defending the status quo, or reliving past glories. We must constantly look to the future, develop new leadership, adapt policies to changing conditions and new technologies, but — always, always — with unswerving loyalty to the mission of the trade union movement as the instrument for improving and enhancing the working and living conditions of those who work for wages."*
>
> **— President George Meany at the 1979 Convention.**

> *"Ten thousand times has the labor movement stumbled and bruised itself. We have been enjoined by the courts, assaulted by thugs, charged by the militia, traduced by the press, frowned upon in public opinion, and deceived by politicians.*
>
> *"But notwithstanding all this and all these, labor is today the most vital and potential power this planet has ever known, and its historic mission is as certain of ultimate realization as is the setting of the sun."*
>
> **— Eugene V. Debs after the Pullman strike in 1894.**

Appendix

Merger Guidelines

Since the merger of the AFL and the CIO in 1955, the number of AFL-CIO affiliates has declined from 135 to 96, primarily through the process of merger. A review of the membership trends and structure of the remaining affiliates, together with an analysis of structural changes in the workforce, demonstrates that more and more unions are considering mergers as a means to increased collective bargaining power and heightened organizing ability.

While most of the mergers that have taken place to date have proved to be mutually beneficial to the organizations and membership involved, it is important that future mergers provide the optimum combination to confront the problems of a rapidly changing economy. As the emphasis on mergers increases and the number of unions declines, care must be taken to insure that future mergers represent the optimum, beneficial combination.

To help both the AFL-CIO and its affiliates achieve these goals, comprehensive, specific guidelines should be adopted. Guidelines dealing with mergers cannot adequately incorporate all of the factors that might make a merger rational and appropriate, and it is essential that the guidelines not retard the affiliates' interest in consolidation.

After careful review, the Committee feels that mergers should take place among unions whose members share a community of interest based on their employment sector. However, since many affiliates' members work in several industrial occupational sectors, the community of interest concept must be defined broadly enough to include a substantial number of unions in each category.

Where two or more unions enjoying substantial community of interest merge, the Executive Council should approve such mergers without hesitation. A merger meeting the criterion of vertical integration should be similarly approved. Where no community of interest or vertical integration is apparent, serious examination of all relevant considerations should be given by the Executive Council before approval of the merger is granted.

To be considered as having a presumptive community of interest with the other unions in an industrial grouping, based on federal government classifications, an affiliate either should have at least 20 percent of its members employed in that industrial category or its members in that category should constitute at least 20 percent of the total AFL-CIO members therein. A union meeting one of these two criteria would satisfy the community of interest objective. But other unions which do not meet either criteria could still have an opportunity to demonstrate a sufficient community of interest with certain unions or even all unions within the grouping to make a merger both rational and appropriate.